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be possessed by them. Between the roots of the tree offerings were placed—two or three bottles on their sides, or a calabash filled with sacred clay.

When the time came to dance to the gods of the kankan tree, a tunic of cotton was placed about its trunk. While the drums spoke to the gods, white clay was spread over the bark, a chicken was killed, and its blood allowed to spray the tree and drip into a calabash placed on the ground to receive it. Eggs inside obia pots were put beside the tree, and bottles filled with sweet liquor and the juice of sugar cane. All about its wide trunk the dancers swayed and leaped, each dancing to her own spirit until, at the height of their ecstasy, there were a few among them who would climb the great tree itself, and dance on its branches. The drums continued until the frenzy ebbed. Had they stopped sooner, those in the tree could not have remained there safely or in safety have descended to the ground.

At other times, women came to Gedeonsu to ask him for children, and those who were troubled by his spirit brought offerings, though the great dances were held when the old year came to an end, and the big offerings were then made.

"If a man were to cut down a kankan tree, Gedeonsu would cut off his foot. I myself saw it happen," said a man to us at S'ei. "And his sister got the god."

The kankan tree gods could be bought, too. A woman who wanted fertility would seek to buy Gedeonsu. Others might wish to have Tinné. Only an individual who had a spirit which gave him the right to make obias and call the gods could get the spirit for one who wished to buy it. Such a man would take an obia pot, fill it with water and place inside it cowrie shells which had not been cleansed. After speaking his invocation, he would add a sacred white stone, called an obia stone, and with a calabash in one hand and a bell in the other, he would go to the tree and address the spirits as he rang the bell. When the water became ruffled, it was a sign that the god had entered it. Quickly he would cover the calabash with a cloth and take it away with him.

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society, the "Congo" sticks, as they were called here, or the "fighting" sticks. 532

The carvings, however, which we were admiring in the house of the captain of Ma'lobbi were for secular use. The Bush Negro craftsman brought to the ornamenting of his paddles and his canoe seats, to his house posts, and particularly to the door of his treasure house, to his women's combs, and trays, and food stirrers, and clothes beaters all the traditional skill and patience. But the exceptional carver brought also the cunning in his fingers which his gods had given to him and only to few others on the river. Such a man was the captain of Ma'lobbi. Into the traditional designs such a man wove lines for the love of seeing them grow under his hand, for there were always single motifs which the people versed in the symbolism of the art would describe as "beautiful," as having no meaning. Yet with few exceptions the massing of outlines in a unified design bore on fertility. Men and women alone or together, and male and female animals were represented in all but occasional pieces. [501]

The Bush Negro artist was a man of consequence on the river. His companions admired his skill, and the young women were proud to have his handiwork. If he showed his gifts early, he was at an advantage in courting a girl of an influential family. The girl's mother, who shared in the gifts of her daughter's suitor, might be willing to overlook other less advantageous traits in the man or in his family, while the girl's uncles would not be loath to have such a man in their family to teach his art to his sons, who would be their successors. 532 554 584

On several occasions we were permitted to see how very deeply this appreciation of fine carving went. As in the instance of the paddle we had acquired from the wife of the captain of Ma'lobbi, it had happened often that the consent of the woman to sell a given piece was necessary before any trading could take place. Sometimes we traded directly with the woman, sometimes she asked her husband, or her brother, or her son, as the more worldly 432 562 439

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person, to act for her. But always hers was the final word, and often that word when the time came for us to carry away the piece was "No."

"It was made for me by my husband when I was a young girl. Now he sleeps, he is no more. I want to have it," was a statement which ended all bargaining.

Sometimes even after we had paid the woman, and stored the piece away, she returned with the moist coins in her hand, asking for the carved implement.

"Before some man from here will go to the city to buy me a pangi, I may lose the money, or he may lose it on the way. But if the clothes beater is here, I can use it and look at it. I want to keep it."

One vivid incident of bargaining concerned a peanut pounding board which had belonged to the sister of Bassia Anaisi. We were sitting and talking with him and his grandmother, when our eyes rested on his sister's house. From a projection hung a strikingly beautiful piece of carving. The rectangular portion of the board on which the peanuts were crushed was bordered on top and bottom with filigreed carving. It was made of brown-heart wood with inlays of purple-heart. Bassia Anaisi's sister supplemented our guesses of what the designs meant. The top represented a woman's head and headdress. The small brass nails, which made a glistening line in the center of the upper curve, were the cicatrizations on the woman's face.

"Look," said the woman, "she is a woman, but a woman hawk. Here is her neck, and the small cut-out circles here are her breasts, those curves at both ends are the wings. The very small nails are the cicatrizations on the thighs. She is a woman, and she has made herself beautiful. This large rounded portion is her belly, and the smaller one underneath is the *gonu mofo*—the gun's mouth," the last being their image for the vagina. Meeting this from the bottom curving upwards was a half-circle, which represented the male member. At the other end was more embellishment. In the center was a double curve to symbolize the first phase of the moon. Below were two "*Ingi Kodyo*,"

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Indian cudgels, a figure of speech for the buttocks, in this instance those of the woman, and again the male representation. This was edged with a border of deep curves which the woman said was mere ornamentation—scrolls. On another pounding board, however, of this village, a similar border was said to represent the boa constrictor. This board stood on two legs, each the width of the board and about two inches high, and worked in the same cut-through scroll design.

When we suggested that we might care to acquire the board, the woman became apprehensive. She took up the board, and excusing herself, disappeared with it inside her hut.

"No, no," she called from the house, when her brother went to tell her of the offer we had made for it. "I don't want money for it. I like it. I will not sell it."

The sum we offered was modest enough, but not inconsiderable for this deep interior. We increased it, then doubled our original offer. There was still no wavering on the woman's part, but the offer began to interest her family. Such wealth should not be refused. Bassia Anaisi began to urge her in our behalf.

"With this money you can buy from the white man's city a hammock, and several fine cloths. You should not refuse this."

The old woman took up the discussion, then another sister, and a brother. At last the bassia took us aside, and asked us to leave his sister alone with them.

"We will have a krutu, and tomorrow you will hear. She is foolish not to sell. But she cares for the board. It is good, too, when a woman loves what her man has carved for her. We will krutu about it, and you shall hear."

Three days passed before the woman's permission was given to dispose of the piece.

"When they see this, your people will know our men can carve!" she exclaimed in a voice which held as much regret as pride.

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magic on their owners. And there was the Gankwe woman who brought us a paddle representing the bird she called the *apassa*.

"We Gankwe people do not eat the apassa," she had whispered to us when we bought the paddle.

5

In the house of the captain of Ma'lobbi we sat and talked of the carvings of the Saramacca people, and as we talked, they brought us some of the things the men of the village had carved.

"Do all men carve?" we asked the chief.

"Not everyone has the spirit. But every young man tries. If a man is good at hunting, or on the river, then perhaps he can get the things he needs to give his wife from others for what he can give the carver. But it is better that he do these things for his wife himself. The women like it better."

Not everyone could make a boat, he said, nor was everyone able to carve the *pau pau dindu*, the intricate "wood within wood" motifs that made a strip go like a twisted snake in and out, in and out, through a design. And not everyone could make a drum. Like that apinti he had there.

It was the opening for which we had been waiting.

We had been admiring this drum since we had come into his house, we said. We remembered it from the first time on our way up river. It was as fine as any we had seen. Had he made it himself?

He smiled his appreciation.

"It is a fine apinti, ai," agreed several of the men sitting about.

An apinti was one of the things we wanted to take to show the white man. This one, especially, we would like to buy. Would he sell it?

He looked at us for a moment, and then gently shook his head. "To make an apinti is not a small thing. Not everyone can make an apinti. I have worked on it for a long time, and it is not yet finished. This drum I will not sell."

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We redoubled our urging.

"White man, do you know what it is to make an apinti—an obia drum?"

A man had to have the proper spirit before he might address the god of the tree from which the drum was to be made. When he had felled the tree, he cut off from the trunk the part he wanted to use and took it to his village. Over it he had to pour the blood of a cock which he sacrificed that the gods might come when the drum called them. The maker had also to provide sweet rum and cassava and eggs. The cassava was eaten by the people, but the eggs were for the spirit of the drum, and only half the sweet rum was drunk—the rest was poured over the wood. When the body of the new drum had been fashioned, the people gathered and sang, but they did not dance, for the head yet remained to be made. A pingo, or a deer, might furnish the skin, but these animals were shot where they had been tracked in the bush, and not offered to the drum. Only chickens were given it. And when the drum was complete, then the maker sang his song alone.

"But the drum is not finished yet. It can be played on, for it has a head, and its spirit has been satisfied. But the carving is not yet done. I have worked on it a long time," he repeated. "I want them to play it for my spirit when I am dead."

A silence fell as he finished. There was nothing more to be said.

"White man, we have sat together in pleasure. You have come to the true, true Saramacca from far away. You have bought the carvings of my people. The apinti drum I cannot sell you. But this stool you like I want you to have."

He took up one of the round-topped benches, with carefully worked sides, and four purple-heart inlays on top, each in the shape of a fowl.

"Take it with you to your white man's country. When you show it, write on a paper that the captain of Ma'lobbi made it."

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115 "So we see from the Kromanti obia on your arm." Was
706 she, a woman, possessed of the war-like Kromanti spirit?
789 we asked her.

"It is as you see. I am a woman, and I have Kromanti—and it's strong Kromanti."

"We had not heard of women your age getting Kromanti."

"Ai, there are not many, but when my spirit comes, I dance heavy. I dance like the men."

We must have appeared unconvinced, for she became more emphatic.

"What they do in other villages, white man, I do not know. But I have Kromanti, and when the drums speak here at Djamungo I, too, come."

She rose and went into the inner chamber of the house, where the hammocks were hung, and brought out several objects wrapped in old cloth.

432 "Bayo said I should have obias for you when you came.
439 He said you would pay well for obias. I have these for
789 you."

The trading commenced. There were two small images—"*gadus*" they were called, both crudely carved. One was called Winti Nyamusi. It was a spirit which gave children to women.

787 "When I come to ask for children, then I take sweet
842 rum in my mouth, and I spray the gadu, then I say, '*Naymusi, da wa' buno mi'i*—O Spirit Naymusi! Give me a fine child.' Then the child will come."

What was the other image, the larger one, with anteater's bristles inserted at sides and top?

789 "That is a Kromanti obia. It is the Opete spirit, the buz-
789 zard. When you take it with you, you must speak to it so.
789 You must say, 'Obia-o, I am carrying you away with me. You must look after me, you must see that my life is spared, O great spirit.' Then you must spray it with rum, but not the sweet rum, not for Kromanti."

789 There were other obias she had for us, some to be worn about the neck, and others to be worn below the knee.

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So it was with each god, until the boy was ready to be initiated into the Kromanti Society.

"There are many, many krutu, white man, for a boy has much to learn."

When those who directed the krutu were satisfied that the boy had learned how to serve the gods he had been given, that he knew their powers, and those things which were hateful to them and would incur their displeasure, then a dance was held for him so that he might demonstrate before the assembled festive villagers that he was ready for manhood.

"We give a big play for a boy who gets his gods for the first time. When the gods come to him at this dance at the bidding of the drum, and he dances hard, then his family is pleased. When a boy dances, then we know what is in him. We know whether his gods are strong, whether he is to be feared."

Once the father had transferred his gods to his son, he did not dance much himself. He might continue to play the drum at sacred dances, but dancing and drumming were for the younger men. His son's worship of the gods through the dance released the father for the study of obia. With the governing elders, the father took up his rôle as a clan member who sought the will of the ancestors when new tasks were to be undertaken.

"What happens if the father has few gods to give his son?" we asked.

"Then his mother's eldest brother gives his to the boy."

"What if the boy's uncle has none to give?"

That happened so seldom that he could not remember such an instance, but he had heard it said that this had occurred once or twice.

"A man must have gods to help him live. If his family can give him none, then they buy gods for him. Sometimes there are gods in the family that are not too strong, and they want the boy to have strong gods. They go to a man who knows about such things and who himself has strong gods and buy a god for the boy from him."

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REBEL DESTINY

A man who wished to buy a god for his son went to a renowned obia man and agreed to pay him a certain sum of money if, at the end of the period of training, the god came to the boy.

"When the obia man says the boy is ready, they give a dance. At this dance, the drum is played for the god, and the boy must dance. If the god comes to him, then the obia man gets his money, but if the god does not come, then he does not get what was promised him, because they had made an agreement for a god, and no god came."

The training was not very difficult—it was not like the training for becoming an obia man. A boy was given obia water to wash in. Every eight days the water in the obia pot was changed, and this bathing continued for three moons. When the ritual of purification was over, he was taught the drum rhythms of the god, the invocations which the drum sounded, and the spoken invocations. Songs, and make-up for the dancing, and the dancing itself he was taught, and when he might call upon the god, and what he must do when the god comes, and what offerings the god was to receive. If the god spoke "tongues," he was also instructed in the appropriate language. There were the words of the mocking little Apuku gods and the sounds which only Toné people made, and there was the "Kromanti tongo."

"Can all the gods be bought?" we asked.

"Kweti, kweti!" he shook his head in emphatic denial. "The river gods cannot be bought. You are born a Toné man or woman, or the Toné god comes to you from your family. But all the Vodu gods you can buy; and the god Bongo, the alligator; and the ant hill gods and the gods of the kankan tree, and the Apuku bush gods." He paused for an instant, as if he were considering something. "And men buy Kromanti for their sons, if they have none to give them. Almost every man in the bush has Kromanti. If he hasn't it, then he tries to buy it for his sons. A man needs Kromanti. When he has the Kromanti spirit, fire cannot hurt him, nor glass, nor anything that cuts—

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anything made of iron—nor can a gun shoot him, nor an arrow pierce him. If he goes through a thicket of thorns or climbs a thorny palm tree when the spirit comes to him, he is not harmed. That is Kromanti."

"How much does a person pay an obia man for giving a boy Kromanti?" we asked.

"It costs plenty, white man. But a good obia man never asks too much. If a man says he will give the boy Kromanti, for not too many guilders, then we know he will do it. But if a man asks forty, fifty, then we know he is not an honest man, and he is not a good man. I have heard, though, of a good obia man who took as much as twenty-four guilders, but he gave the boy a strong Kromanti spirit, and it took much time to teach him."

3

From time to time members of Bayo's family visited our camp. Each time we were introduced to a new brother, or father, or *sawagi*—brother-in-law. Among these visitors was a man whose name we never learned, though we had talked with him a good deal. He was, we later came to know, a man who knew obia. He was a scholar among his people, a thoughtful man who often went about alone, instead of being accompanied by a fellow clan member or a member of his family, as is customary among these people. Like Bayo, *he had an incest kunu*, and at his age, he had already had occasion to see what kunu planned for him. He coughed badly. When men went to cut timber, he could not go with them because of his cough and the fever which went with the cough.

"Have you been to a good obia man?" we asked him.

He smiled. Of what use to go from one diviner to the next, from one man who had special magic to another, when a man knew that what was troubling him was kunu?

"Come to the city with us," we said, when we knew him better, "and we will take you to a doctor. He may be able to do something for you."